

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 are in this application and are presented for consideration. By this Amendment, Applicant has amended claims 1, 6, 18, 19 and 20. Applicant has also added new independent claims 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

Claims 1-5, 8-11, 14-17, 19 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Meeusen (US 3,857,478).

Meeusen discloses a system for transporting heavy articles. The system comprises endless conveyor chains 1. Separate endless chain conveyor sections are aligned in tandem order along each side of the transporter to support containers 2 for transport in the lengthwise direction thereof. Load-supporting members 3 are connected to the endless chains in pivoted relation to one another and each member is provided with a resilient pad 4 which is formed with teeth or projections 5 on which the articles rest. When the containers are loaded on the conveyor system, the corner castings 6 of the containers apply heavy pressure on the pads and deflect the teeth or projections 5. The resilient pads serve also to prevent the chain sprockets from being overloaded when a container is moved on the rails from one conveyor chain or pair or set of chains to another. The load-supporting members 3 form bearings 7 for rollers 8 the axles or trunnions of which pass through and connect the links 9 of the conveyor chains 1. These rollers, in the upper flights of the endless chains run on rails 10 and the chain links support further smaller rollers 11 which in the lower flights of the chains run on bottom rails 12. The container load is thus transmitted through the resilient pads 4, 5 and the support members 3 through the rollers 8 to rails 10.

In another embodiment, Meeusen discloses support members 3, carrying the resilient toothed pads 4, are connected, in pivoted relation to one another, to a drive chain 13 which cooperates with sprocket wheels. The load-transmitting rollers 8a are pivotally connected to separate endless chains 14 and 15 which are not positively driven by sprockets. These rollers 8a, which transmit the load to the rails 10, are driven in rolling contact with the rails by tangential force applied thereto by the members 3 when these are displaced by the driving chain 13. The support members have channel members 16 to drive the rollers. The rollers are laterally restrained by members 17 secured to the rails. More than two conveyors 1 are provided if the containers 2 are loaded crosswise.

Meeusen fails to teach or suggest the combination of a transport device having support elements with each support element having at least one surface in sliding engagement with a rail. As best seen in Figure 3 of Meeusen, load-supporting member 3 fails to have a sliding surface for engaging a rail. In fact, Figure 2 of Meeusen discloses that each load-supporting member 3 is fixed to bearings 7 via a bolt connection. Meeusen clearly discloses that load-supporting member 3 has no sliding surface for engagement with a rail. In the present invention, a support element has at least one sliding surface so that as the traction element moves, the sliding surface of the supporting element slides on the rail. This advantageously allows the load to be downwardly dispersed to the sliding surface of the supporting element and provides for better weight distribution of the good or pallet. Meeusen fails to provide such an advantage since the load-supporting member 3 is fixed to the conveyor chain 1, which disadvantageously applies stress to the chain conveyor 1. Meeusen fails to disclose any sort of

sliding surface. As such, the prior art teaches a different approach and fails to suggest the features or advantages of the present invention. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claim 1 as now presented.

Meeusen fails to teach and fails to suggest the combination of a first support element having at least one sliding surface in sliding contact with a first rail and a second support element having at least one sliding surface in sliding contact with a second rail as recited in claim 19. In fact, Meeusen teaches that the load-supporting members 3 are connected to the endless chains in pivoted relation to one another. In Meeusen, the load-supporting members 3 form bearings 7 for rollers 8, which are in rolling contact with rail 10. The present invention takes a different approach. The present invention provides a support element having at least one sliding surface. The support element of the present invention is mounted to the traction element and as the traction element moves, the sliding surface slides along the rail for guiding the traction element. Meeusen fails to disclose that the load-supporting member 3 has a sliding surface. In fact, Meeusen teaches away from the present invention since the load-supporting member 3 is fixed to the bearings 7 via a bolt connection. As such, the present invention teaches a different approach than the prior art by providing a support element that is capable of sliding along a rail. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claim 19 as now presented.

Applicant has added new independent claims 21-25 according to the allowable subject matter noted in the rejection. Specifically, claim 21 is a combination of the features of claims 1, 5 and 6. Claim 22 is a combination of the features found in claims 1, 5, 6 and 7. Claim 23

is a combination of the features found in claims 1 and 12. Claim 24 is a combination of claims 1 and 13 as noted in the allowable subject matter in the rejection. Claim 25 is a combination of the features found in claims 1 and 18 as noted as allowable subject matter in the rejection. It is Applicant's position that claims 21, 22, 23 and 24 are allowable as presented.

The prior art as a whole fails to direct the person of ordinary skill in the art toward the feature of the invention. Further, the invention includes cooperating features which provide particular advantages which are neither taught nor suggested by the prior art. Accordingly, Applicant requests that the Examiner favorably consider the amended claims in light of the discussion above.

Further and favorable consideration on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted
for Applicant,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McGlew', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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